Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library

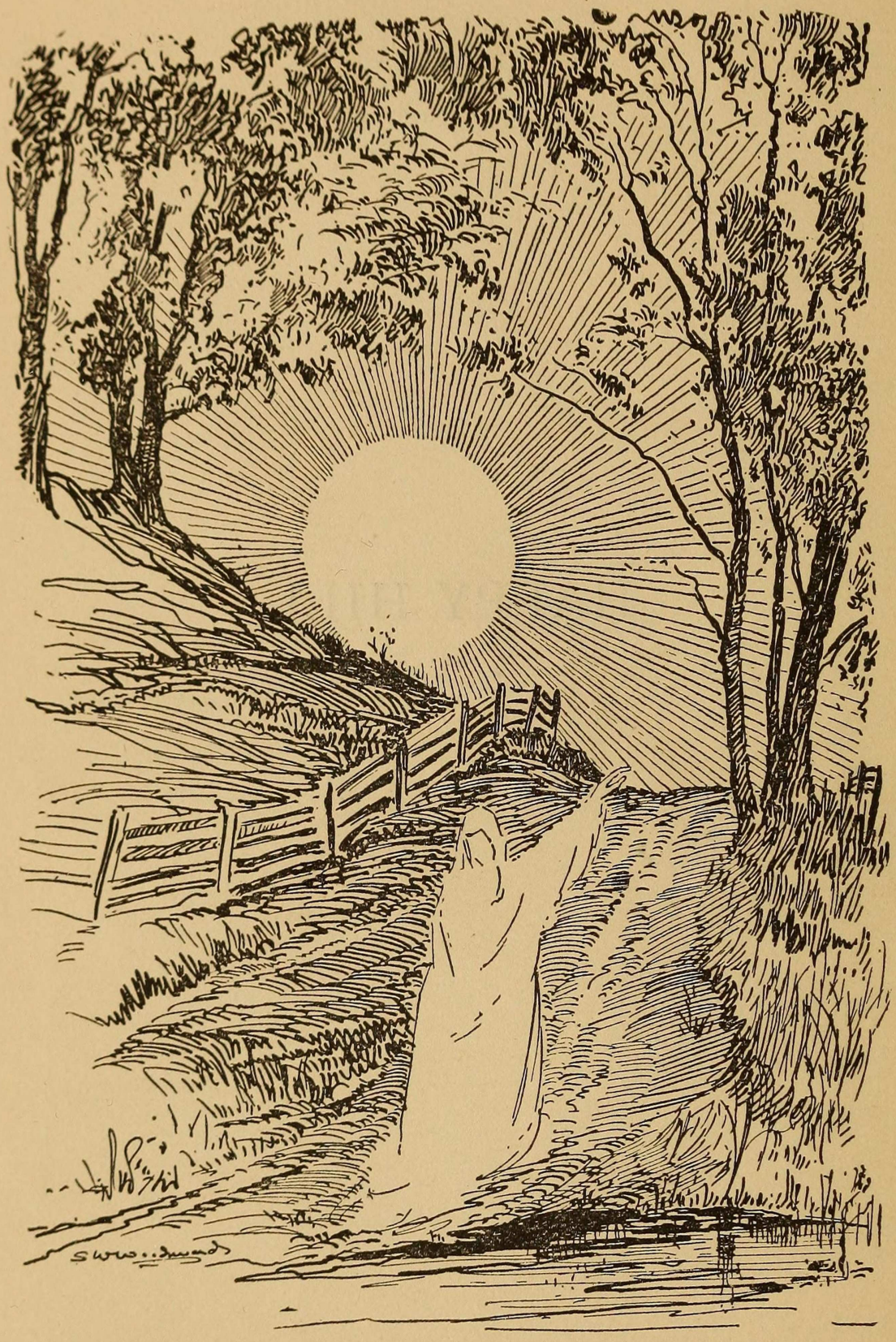
NANCY HANKS LINCOLN PUBLIC LIBRARY
Historical Book Collection

The text of this book remains unchanged from the original published version. It should be noted that some comments or words in this edition might be culturally insensitive to certain readers. Views and words of the author or authors are theirs alone and not of the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library. Certain words or slang used in the past had different cultural meanings at the time and might not mean the same thing today.

Publishing and spelling errors remain unchanged from the original versions. All text images were reproduced exactly without changes to the existing material.

C267
22

HAPPY HILL



"SHE POINTED TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD."

See page 53

HAPPY HILL

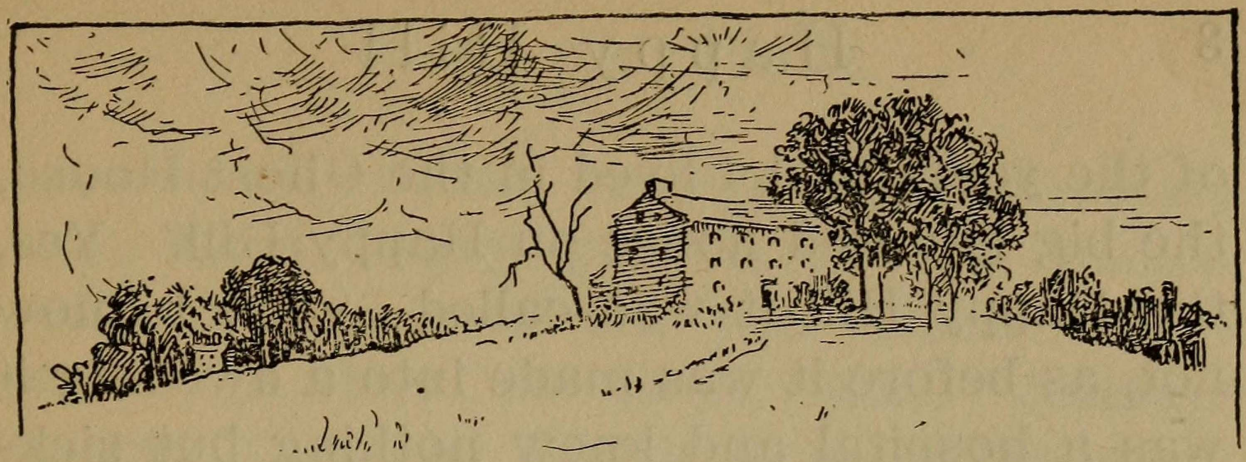
BY

BERTHA LUNT LEACH

Illustrated by Sidney W. Woodward

BOSTON
THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY
1920

DEC 27 1920



HAPPY HILL

WHATEVER is written here is not a figment of the imagination, or a phantasm of a dream. I know that an unknown law has ever existed, and that it exerts a direct and continued influence over us; but whether supernatural or natural I cannot tell. I merely assert that the spirit which God takes away can and does return again, and that we feel the power that this influence throws over us for good or evil.

I can truly say that this undefinable something, this unseen ghost or spirit, this wind that blows,—I know not whence,—has had a part in my life; but my present knowledge furnishes me with no certainty of the mystery of the chasm between life and death.

Even as I sit here writing, a chill and strange shudder creeps over me when I think

of the years that I lived in the Ghost House, the big haunted house on Happy Hill. Yes, the Happy Hill it was called—why, I know not, as before it was made into a dwelling it was a hospital and knew nothing but sickness and suffering.

If you have leisure and will read on, I will tell you of a young wife's experience; of her going to the ghost place, and of her leaving it.

At the age of seventeen years I married a man nearly twenty years older than myself, and left my girlhood home in Maine to live several hundred miles away in the quaint town of Milton, where we occupied a large house, once a hospital. This property belonged to my husband's father, who had been the head surgeon of the hospital and who was then a prominent physician in the town.

The house was a large, three-story building with a long wing. The top floor had been the men's ward and it still had the rows of iron beds, with the little stands beside them, and all the regular hospital furnishings. We closed up the second and third floors as the first floor gave us sufficient space.

This new home of mine was about three miles from town, and could be reached only

by a rough country road bordered on either side by a heavy growth of low bushes, red oak and southern pine trees. There were but two or three small cottages on lonely spaces. The location of the hospital was selected, I suppose, on account of the good air and quiet surroundings—more quiet than I could have wished, as I discovered later; for this house had long been called the "Haunted House." However, being a country girl, I did not mind the lonesome surroundings at first, and was pleased with my new home and thought it a very handsome house.

As time went on I heard that no one had been willing to live there. My husband told me he supposed the gossip to be idle talk, and thought the place would make us a nice home. As I became acquainted with people in the nearby town the gossip began to reach my ears.

One old gentleman said, "Think you will stay here long? You're holding out pretty well. Folks have been afraid to stay here since the doctor closed the hospital."

"Why," I said, "what is the matter? I like my home very much. It is nice and very

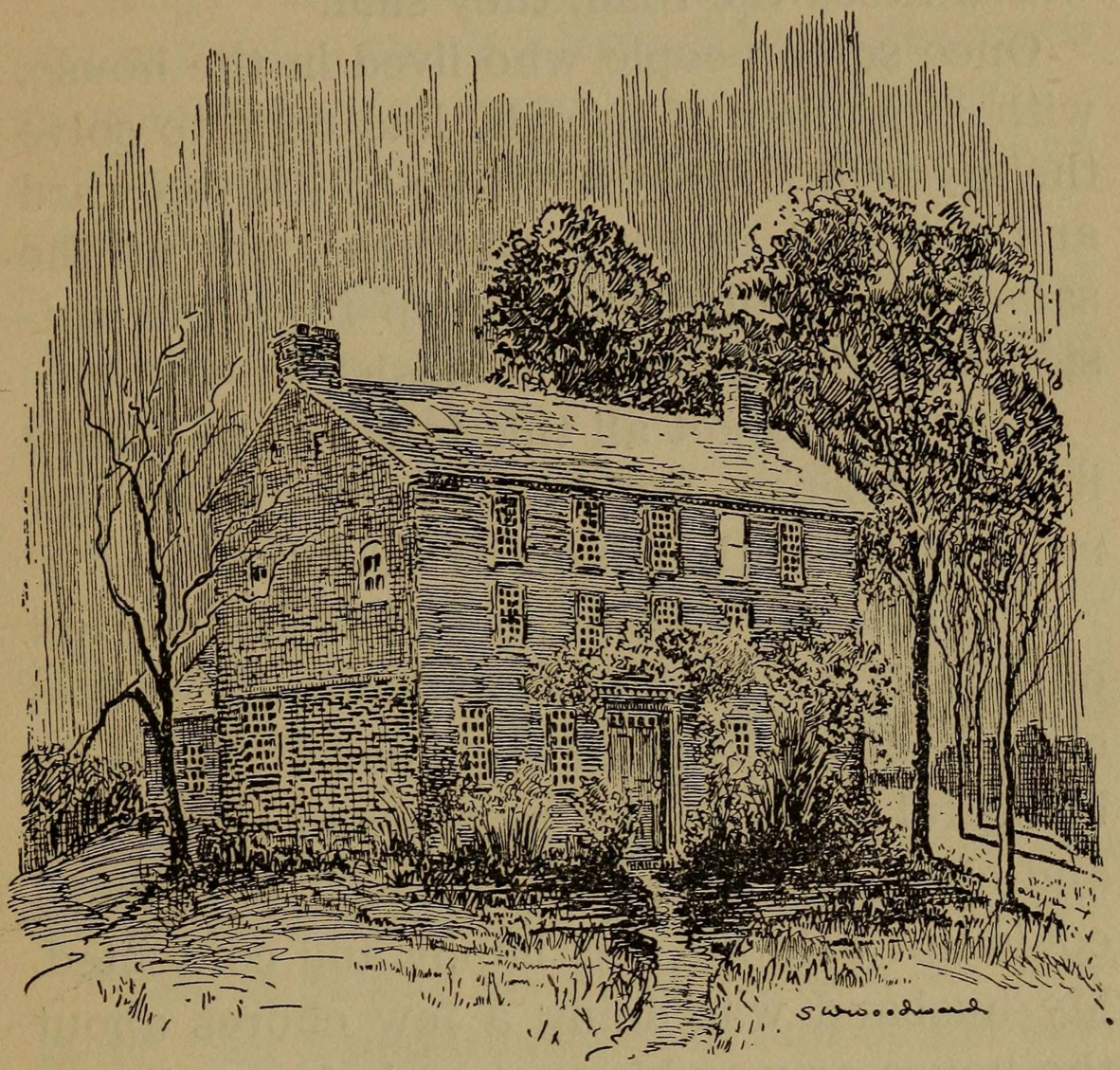
comfortable, and we have such good air. Of course the house is too large, but we do not use all of it. What is the trouble with the place?"

"Well," he said, "you know it is said, though I suppose it is only talk, that all the folks here ain't alive; some of the departed still wander about."

I laughed and thought it quite a joke.

But, as time went on, I continued to hear many different stories, and noticed that we were asked guarded questions, such as: "Are you lonesome here?" "Do you stay alone evenings?" One neighbor said: "Used to be a family live here, nice folks,—awfully sorry when they moved away—best neighbors we ever had." I quickly asked why they moved, and she answered: "They saw things they did not understand,—light in the top ward when no one could possibly have been up there."

I was told how a family who had lived several miles from here would whip up the horses and drive quickly past before they got to the rise of the hill, for upon glancing up at the top of house in passing, they saw flashes of light which some said were blue,



THE "HAUNTED HOUSE"

others green. The lights generally came from the windows in the front of the house which faced the road, they said.

Once some people who lived in the house, with a number of friends, had tried to solve the mystery. They went up to the top ward and found it in total darkness, but at the same time people looking up from the outside saw the ghost-light flash.

I tried to forget all this talk and to regard it as nonsense, but in spite of myself, my mind persistently pondered over it.

One summer's night at dusk, I strolled out on the lawn, and absent-mindedly walked quite a distance from the house. It was a beautiful night. The moon was rising full and clear, the air was soft and balmy, and I could not help but feel happy and contented. My husband was doing a few chores about the house as was his custom before retiring.

Presently I turned to go home in the quiet and peacefulness which seemed to surround everything. Absently glancing up, as I neared the house, I distinctly saw my husband lighting a match in the top ward. It flamed up and went out. I went quickly into the house,

and was startled to see my husband coming to meet me.

"Why!" I exclaimed, "Frank, I just saw you in the top ward! How did you get down so quickly? You must have had wings."

"Up in the top ward! What do you mean?" he asked.

"I just saw you light a match up there and supposed you had gone after something. Some one is up there."

"Nonsense!" he said. "Nonsense! No one is up there."

"Frank, there is someone up there, or in the house somewhere. I am no child. I know when I see a thing. Perhaps it is Arthur."

Arthur was the colored man who worked for us; he lived in the cottage under the hill.

"Yes, it might be Arthur," said my husband, "for I told him to take one of the best mattresses up there, if he needed one."

We took a kerosene lamp and went up the long stairway shouting Arthur's name, but Arthur was evidently far away, for we received no answer from him or anyone else.

A queer feeling came over me, and with shaken nerves and grim forebodings, I clung

closer to my husband as we went down the stairs. The tales I had listened to rang over and over in my mind.

In vain I tried to calm myself and said, "I will not be foolish. Why, I never was afraid in light or darkness!" Still, I know, in my heart, that I was afraid. I ventured to say to my husband, "You know what we have heard about this place."

"Bosh," he said, "Don't get foolish. It was all your imagination. I thought you had more sense than to take any stock in these stories."

"Well," I said, "I can't help it. I did see a light; more than that I feel the presence of someone in the house."

Just then the colored man, Arthur, came in the side door with the evening paper that he had brought from town—so we could account for him. I told him someone was in the attic.

At that my husband laughed and said, "She thinks she saw someone, Arthur."

But Arthur stared, stiffened up a little, and nervously said, "Guess I'll be going home."

"No, please don't go just yet," I pleaded. "I wish you and Frank would go over every

room upstairs and see if you can find anyone in the house."

But my husband told Arthur to go home, for he knew he was tired after his day's work, and said, "My wife is a little nervous to-night; I guess she saw the moon."

I remonstrated at his making light of my feelings and told them I was not afraid of anything living, but I was afraid of something that seemed to be, and yet could not be found. I wearily remarked that I wished we lived somewhere else.

"This is the first time I ever knew you were nervous," my husband said. "Perhaps you worked too hard to-day."

At that time I was taking very good care of my health as we were expecting a little one in the near future. I told him I was not tired and was feeling well enough, but I knew something was wrong.

"I feel as though someone were near me," I said; "someone I cannot see." And my mind reverted apprehensively to all the stories I had heard. "You know, Frank, we have made light of things they have told us about this place, but something is wrong here. There must have been some reason

why no one would live in a nice place like this. There isn't a prettier home in town. Of course it is a little way out of the village, but I do not mind that, as I am used to the country."

"Well, never mind their old gossip," he replied. "You know they must talk. This place is noted for that. Your digestion may be bad—better take a little bismuth and pepsin."

"I do not need medicine," I told him, "but I do feel faint."

"Well, go to bed and you will forget your worrying in the morning."

I followed his advice, undressed and went to bed, but was still disturbed in mind. However, I tried to go to sleep. After some minutes, my husband—thinking I was asleep—took the light and went out, leaving me in the dark. I was very frightened, but kept quiet as I heard my husband's slippers shuffling through the long hall and up the stairs. I crept out of bed and listened at the door. I heard him go into every room in the house and thought to myself, "He does think there is someone in the house, or he would not be looking the second time." When I heard

him coming down, I crept back into bed. As I did so, that peculiar gripping chill came over me, and I began to cry.

When my husband came into the room and saw that I was awake, he asked me, "Had a nap? Why, what's the matter?" He bent closer, "Got a headache?"

"No," I answered, "but I have got a chill."

"Well, that is too bad. Better let me call Arthur and have him go for father. He will fix you up. You know he is the best doctor ever."

"No, don't send for him; I am just nervous. Let's have a cup of chocolate."

We often did this for a little party by ourselves before retiring. So we made our evening lunch, and it did cheer me up.

Going back to bed, I fell into a heavy sleep and did not awake until late in the morning. It was a bright sunny day. As I dressed, I heard the red breasted robin singing on the lawn, and the fear of the night before vanished.

Summer sped away swiftly, but there was the glorious Indian summer which lasted until nearly Christmas. There was hardly any severe weather, for the Gulf Stream tem-

pered the climate in winter and gave us cool and refreshing sea breezes in summer. So in the glorious autumn, we still walked and drove and passed many pleasant days with our friends; and I felt quite content. My first child, my dear little Josephine, was playing on the floor, gathering her playthings together only to strew them about again. She was always happy, always sunny, and my love for her was great. It is a joy to remember how, while her father sat reading by the big lamp, I sat and rocked her and sang her favorite lullaby:

"Where do the birdies go when night comes on?
"Some of them go to their cradle nest,
"Some of them to their mother's breast,
"But they all find a place that they love the best
"When night comes on."

She seemed to like this little lullaby better than any other, and would drop off to sleep when I sang it to her.

One night when she was going to sleep and all was quiet, there came to me a sense of an

invisible presence. Suddenly the stillness was broken by a hard laugh, rough and rasping, empty of all reason, but filled with malice; a madman's laugh. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" it went. It froze my heart and rendered me speechless.

Josie opened her eyes; I sat tense and still, unable to move. My husband got up.

"Who's that?" I managed to articulate thickly. Then there was a short chuckle more gruesome than before, if such a thing were possible; then silence reigned again.

Neither of us spoke, but I saw my husband's hands twitch. I broke into a cold sweat, and my heart felt as though it would strangle me. I remembered the light I had seen up in the top ward that summer's night.

My husband walked to the door, as the sound seemed to come from the wall or outside.

"Is anyone out there?" I asked.

"I'll see," he answered, and went for the lantern.

"Don't go there," I begged. "It may be some tramp or crazy person. It must be." But even as I said these words I felt that he would not find anyone. While he was light-

ing the lantern I again pleaded, "Please don't go out; don't leave me."

"I may as well look around," he answered, "Some tramp I suppose. The sound did not seem to be in the house."

I heard him go up the walk slowly, as if looking in all directions, and I cried out, "Please come back!" Fear had overcome me, and my nerves were shaken beyond the point of further self control. I remained rigid, unable to control a single muscle. Every attempt to get up failed, and I held my child with stiffened arms. Only when she commenced to cry loudly was the spell broken.

My husband went around the entire house, and coming in by the side entrance said, "I don't see anyone. Guess it must have been some of the folks up the road going past."

"No," I said, "it was right here by me, and quite near, too. Why, it seemed almost in my ear, didn't it to you?"

Over my husband's face flitted a queer, but instantly controlled expression; and he did not make any reply. I know he did not under stand the phenomenon any more than I did, and I shivered beneath a creepy sense of mystery and fear of the unknown.

Frank filled his pipe and calmly commenced to smoke and read aloud some of the headings from the evening paper. Nevertheless I could see he was disturbed more than he cared to show, but I felt a reluctance about speaking of the unexplainable incident.

My baby had gone to sleep again, yet I did not feel like putting her into her crib, and did not dare to leave her alone. Her father said, "Better tuck the little one in. You look tired. Let me take her; I'll put her to bed." He reached for her and carried her to her crib, as was often his custom.

It was getting late, and as he went around the house to lock up for the night, I followed, although I said nothing of my fear. Constantly I asked myself, "Who was it? What was it? What do those sounds and lights mean?"

"But there seemed to be no answer; no way to solve the question. Neither did my husband offer any further supposition. We left the light burning all night, as we had always done since the baby had come, and this gave me a greater feeling of security.

The next morning, in the bright and cheery sunlight, the whole world seemed gay, for everything was radiant with life and beauty; yet I could not shake off the depression that gripped my heart, and a deep feeling of gloom that had taken possession of my mind. I was quiet, and hesitated to speak of the preceding night's events. Evidently my husband shared my feeling as he did not mention the affair again, seemed preoccupied, ate but little at breakfast, and I could see that his cheerfulness was assumed, for I knew every fleeting expression of his face.

After breakfast he said, "I think I shall ride to Edworth this morning; will you come too?" I immediately thought of the work I had commenced the day before, and hesitated.

"Never mind your work! Come on," he urged.

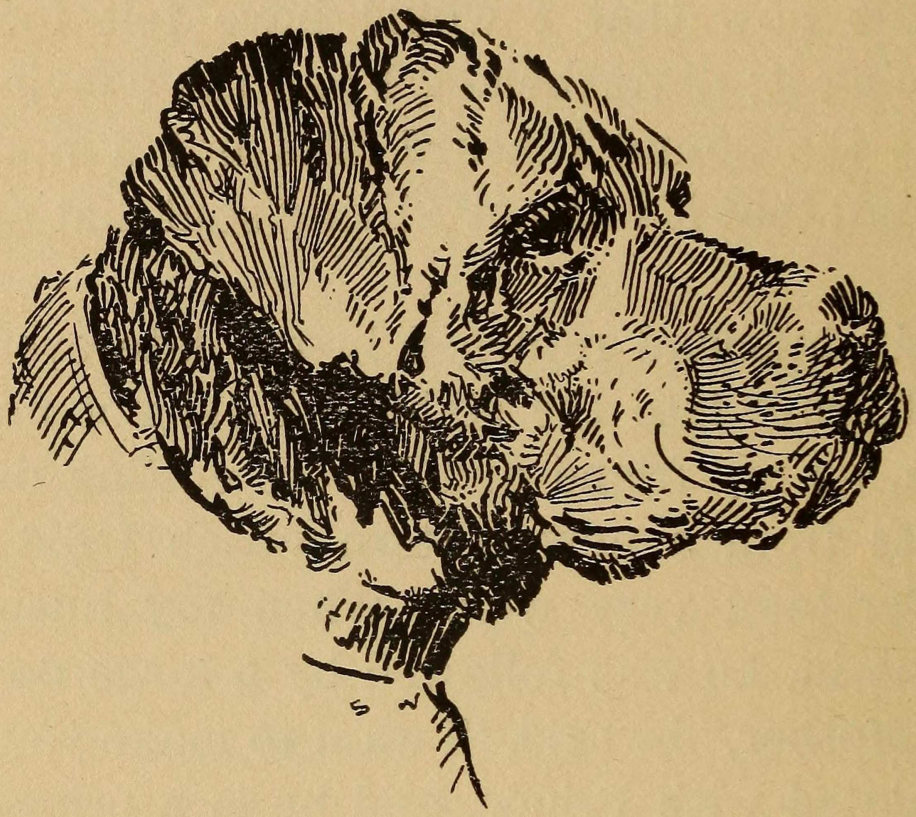
But just at that moment, a neighbor came in and said, "I have come to spend the day," so of course it was decided that I should stay at home. I felt a relief to know I would have someone with me. My friend was a cheerful breezy woman, and in her presence, my spirits fast approached normal.

The day passed pleasantly with idle talk about ordinary happenings. Somehow I could not bring myself to mention the mystery of the previous evening. It was so vague now that I would have felt foolish voicing it; nevertheless, I had the conviction that the sound I heard was not a normal sound; that it was not a living soul that made it.

My husband returned in the late evening and drove into the stable. I did not notice him, as my friend and I were cutting out a dress from a new pattern which I did not understand very well. When my husband came in, he was followed by a large dog.

"Mother," he said, "I want to make you acquainted with Prince, and he is a prince as far as a dog can be. He is a Saint Bernard and was brought from Barbedoes by one of the old sea captains. He is trained and very intelligent. I heard that the captain wanted a good home for him since he could not afford to feed him on account of such a large family and sickness in the house."

He was a magnificent animal, iron gray in color, and stood as high as the table. His head was large with small ears; his hair was



"HE WAS A NOBLE FELLOW"

as long as a wolf's. As he walked his tail would brush the table. I believe he was of the breed that hunts for the lost in the snow. He was a noble fellow.

He seemed so big at first that I hesitated, but when I called him to me and said, "Prince, do you like me?" and putting my arm around him, looked into his gentle pleading eyes, I knew I loved him. With an expression of intense wistfulness, he came close, put his big paw in my lap, and sat down beside me.

"This is your mistress, Prince," said my husband. "Good boy, take care of her." And it seemed as though the dog understood, for he shook himself and wagged his tail.

We put the baby on his back, and as she had never seen a dog, she thought he was a big cat, and said "Kitty, Kitty." He answered "Woof, Woof."

Prince proved to be almost human in his actions and understanding. When my husband bought him, he turned back twice to his old master, and then followed Frank and never left us until he died.

With my good dog I now felt I had a faith-

ful friend and protector. If a stranger looked at him, that person would not bother either me or my property, for he was a good watch dog, as well as gentle and kind.

He was so handsome that I took delight in having a beautiful collar made for him, and when he went to town, I put a large bow of blue ribbon on the side of it, which contrasted well with his gray coat. As he walked softly along with his big feet, he seemed to know he was an impressive fellow, and appeared very proud, but never noticed others unless we spoke to them.

I know that my husband felt less anxious about leaving the baby and me alone during the day with Prince on guard.

Time went on, and the former mysterious sounds faded from my memory. Prince and Josie were together a great deal of the time. She was unusually gentle with him, but if she sat on his head or pulled his ears, he only rolled over, and would endure a great deal from her, for he seemed to love her.

One morning, after he returned from following the carriage a long distance, I gave him an extra dinner in a large platter, for I knew he was hungry. Before he commenced

to eat, he pushed the platter along with his nose until it was close to Josie, who was sitting on a rug. It was as much as to say, "Eat some too."

Another day, baby and I went for a walk, and met a neighbor who was on his way to my house to borrow a large basket which he knew I had. I told him it was in the stable and to go right in and get it. Baby and I soon turned to go back to the house, and I saw my neighbor coming toward me, but minus the basket.

"Couldn't you find it," I asked. "I am sure it is just inside the stable door, as I told you, for I saw it there this morning."

"Oh yes, Mrs. Leach, I *found* it all right, but I did not get it, for Prince took hold of it, too, and held on to it tight, and I declare his fur stood on end. Why, he knows me. I guess he is getting cross."

I told him to come back with me, and I would get it for him.

"I wish you would," he said, "for I don't want to go near that dog again."

As we neared the stable, there was Prince lying down before the door. I spoke to him and said, "Prince, I want the basket." He

never moved. I stamped my foot, and cried, "Prince, mind! Bring me the basket." He made a jump, grabbed it, and dropped it at my feet. Then he began to wag his tail, and wanted to give me his paw. I said, "All right, now give it to Mr. Holt."

He grabbed the basket again, giving it a shake, and walking to Mr. Holt, let it fall before him. Whereupon that gentleman remarked, "Quite a dog after all; guess you don't need to worry much with him around."

I told my husband about it when he came home at night, and he said, "Well, I told him to watch out this morning when I left, and I guess he did all right. He wanted to follow me, but I sent him back, so I can plainly see I do not need to worry about anyone robbing here." He called Prince, called him "Good dog," and gave him some beefsteak.

I felt very safe myself, as the days went on. Each noon I would write a little note to my husband and tie it on the dog's collar and he would trot off three miles to deliver it. It always reached my husband safely.

One day I did not want him to go, so I chained him to a big piazza chair, and thought nothing more about him.

About one o'clock that afternoon, his master drove into the yard, with the chair, well-battered up, in his carriage, and Prince walking grandly beside it.

"Why, what does this mean?" I asked.

My husband laughed, and said, "He dragged that chair all the way to town. Some of the men he met on the way tried to unchain it, but Prince would not let them."

I then explained why I had chained him, and we concluded that the dog thought I had meant him to deliver the chair instead of a note.

"Well," Frank said, "I got it all right, but it made quite a stir in town. I heard he was coming before he got there. I told him he was a faithful dog and brought him home, as I knew you would be worried when you found him gone. I suppose he thought it was time to go, so he started of his own accord."

Fall came again, and now my baby was quite a big girl; she and Prince still rolled on the floor and played on the lawn. We were busy making improvements on our house not only for convenience, but for outside appearance. The paint for the outside

finish was to be of a warm red color, and we had picked out new paper for the living room, as well as new draperies for the hall, and various other little things to add to our comfort and cheer for the coming winter. Every thing seemed on the sunny side for our future.

Josie and I took long walks, and with Prince as a guard, we felt secure and well protected. Time passed pleasantly, and only at odd moments did I think of that mysterious something.

Over the hill was the sailors' burying ground, a lot that had been used when our residence was the Marine Hospital; many of the poor boys were resting there. Arthur would never look over there at night, for he said, "Those dead men walk."

Arthur's wife, Clara, came to the house to do the laundry, and just before dark she would start to go home, for she and Arthur always got home before dark if possible.

One evening I asked Arthur to go to town on an errand, for he thought nothing of walking that distance. He said, "Yes, m'am, I will do it early in the morning."

"Won't you go down to-night? I will

make it all right with you." But the poor superstitious man admitted he did not like to go after dark. I saw that he had something on his mind, and I said, "What is the matter, Arthur?"

"Well," he admitted, "Clara and I've been thinking we're gwine to leave yer."

"Why," I said, "aren't you satisfied; don't we pay you enough? I thought you were very comfortable; and you do just about as you like."

"Don't suppose I could get a dog like Prince, do you?" he asked.

"Why, I don't know," I replied. "Prince is a pretty expensive dog, you know; and it costs nearly as much to feed him as it does a man. I don't think you could afford it; besides, I don't think there is another dog around here like him anyway, for I believe a sea captain brought him to this country. Why do you want a dog?"

"Well," he answered nervously, "you see, Clara and I don't just know how it is, but we have seen something coming down the hill nights, and we jes can't make out what it is."

"Tell me about it," I said, very much interested all at once.

"You see, about the first time it happened," he explained, "was over by the burying ground last moon, when we were hunting for them chickens as hatched out in the woods. You told Clara she could have them, but they are so wild, we can't get near them in the day time. We got some of them chickens, but a few was left. First night we caught two on the limb of a low tree, and when we started to come down the hill, there was someone ahead of us. We called and tried to talk to it, but it kept on goin', and then we ran after it, but it kept just as far ahead of us. Just as we got to the corner of the house it just plain vanished. We saw it, and then there was nothing to see."

I did not speak, and he continued, "We were up there again last night in that old burying ground—I don't like grave yards, but that is where them chickens roost—to see if I could ketch the rest of them. The moon was pretty well up at the time, and we spotted them up a tree. Just as we climbed over the rail fence, something was coming towards us; it just came right up, didn't start from anywhere as I can tell, unless it was the ground. The moon was bright and we

could see the critter began to come up. We jumped over on the other side, and the critter moved to the other side too. Yes, it just danced and glided, didn't make no noise. Clara grabbed a stake out of the fence, and so did I. Guess mine was eight or nine feet long. Then we stood still; I was so plum scared I couldn't move. It was coming toward us all the time, very slow, slow, more slow, moving like a shadow and seemed as though an arm was raised and pointed toward town, and then waved to us to go that way.

"I found I had the stake raised up over mah head; Clara just fell down by mah side on the ground, and I heard her breathing. Still the shadow came nearer and was almost on us. I raised my stake a little higher, and Clara says, 'Kill him!' Then everything was a blur, and the shadow thing began to turn white; it was within a few feet of us. I let mah stake fall upon it with all mah strength, and then I fell to the ground.

"Clara said it just disappeared or went out; at least she didn't see anything of it after that.

"We got down the hill and into the house

and locked the door, but we said, 'No use locking the door—it will come right through; no lock will stop it.' "

I do not know what to say, but this brought back all the worry and perplexity that I had felt in the past. My tongue seemed frozen; I could not speak. I wanted to laugh and tell him it was all nonsense, but I couldn't . Finally, I said, "Well, Arthur, I guess you can do the errand in the morning just as well."

"Yes, ma'am. I will come in the morning," he answered as he started for home down the hill.

I sat down to think. As soon as my husband came home I repeated what Arthur had told me, and asked, "How many are over in the sailors' burying ground?"

"I don't know; they go by numbers. There are no stones, but markers with numbers that are registered with the Board of Health. Father also had a record."

I told him I wished the burying ground was not so near the house, for it was only down the hill, across the field and up another hill. It was enclosed by a fence and brush and trees.

"Pooh," he replied, "those men have been at rest a long time. They don't bother anyone. Dead men don't walk."

"I don't suppose they do, but don't you think they have folks who would like to know where they are buried?" I asked.

"Oh, perhaps some did have, but sailors come from all parts of the globe and lose all track of their kin; some of them do not have any to lose. Sailors are liable to be rovers, and when they are sick they will put up at any port. We have had some pretty rough specimens here, of all nationalities. They were always trying to fight and it took strong discipline to keep them from it."

"I said no more, but after that, I often looked across the field over the hill where I could see the tangled vines and the low bushes which had grown all over the graves, with only an occasional marker showing through.

As the days glided by, I seemed possessed of an inexplicable nervousness. My thoughts, formerly sunny and happy, now seemed to run in an altogether different direction. At times I lost consciousness of physical sense, and could see things pertaining to a rarified

environment with phenomena invisible to others while at the same time I lost my sense of the presence of things. When I came into contact with anyone at these times, I seemed to know all about them, their present, past, and future.

I well remember Mr. Holt saying one day: "I'm going to the main land to-morrow; going to take the little steamer that gets in at one o'clock. I want to put away some money Martha and I have saved. It is not quite safe to keep the money by us."

While he was talking of other things, a cool mist seemed to envelope me; then I saw Mr. Holt in water with his head and one arm above it; then he faded from the vision and I saw nothing but water. Presently the mist turned green and I saw him walking along in fields of green grass; he seemed smiling and happy.

Then I came back to my normal senses; Mr. Holt was talking to Frank, and had not noticed I had not been listening. I knew I had looked into the future, and that a warning for his safety lay in the vision. He would be drowned if I did not prevent it.

When there was a pause in the conversa-

tion I said, "Are you sure you must go to the main land to-morrow?"

"Yes, I have planned to go," said Mr. Holt.

I did not want to seem unreasonable, and I hardly knew how to warn him without making him think me queer. I felt that he would have no understanding of what I had in mind, and that I must use a little diplomacy.

"I wish you and Martha could wait for me, as I am going next week, and do not like to go on the boat alone."

"I am in no particular hurry," he said, "but we don't like to keep the money in the house. Still, I guess it will be all right if we wait. I'll see what Martha says about it to-night."

And all the time I was thinking, "Something will happen if he goes to-morrow. *I must not let him go!*"

As Mr. Holt was taking his hat to go home I said, "I will consider it quite a favor if you will wait until next week."

"Well, then, let's call it Monday, Mrs. Leach. How will that do?" I knew he was not carrying out his intentions, and at any other time I would not have been so persistent in my request. I think that he thought I was rather urgent about it, but in the past

I had done him many little favors, and he could not very well refuse my request.

But he asked, "Do you mind if I bring the money over and put it in the doctor's safe?"

"Why, surely you can, Mr. Holt. And you may be sure it will be safe, even if the house burns down. I keep all my valuables in it. It is large, so there's plenty of room."

That same evening Mr. Holt and his wife came to call on us. With them they brought a little bag made of blue calico which contained two hundred and fifty dollars. This amount was a good deal to them, and they had saved it by hard work and a little income from a cranberry bog that they had cultivated.

We put the money in the safe, and gave them a receipt to show it was there. We laughed and said it would be safe in case we should die suddenly. After a little further talk, we made arrangements to sail the following Monday.

All the next day I thought to myself, "I wish I weren't so positive about things." I did not even talk to my husband about this second sight, for I did not know what to call it, or how to explain it at all.

Nevertheless, I felt I had done right. The day was nearly gone, and I was getting the evening meal, when my husband drove into the yard. He did not stop to unharness, but came directly in and said, "Mother, the little steamer's lost."

I had not heard the news as we had no telephone in those days. I became weak and dropped into the chair beside me, and faintly asked if all the passengers were lost. Frank told me that only three swam to shore safely.

"I knew it," I said; "I knew it. Oh! I am so glad, *so glad!*"

"Glad of what?" Frank asked. "Did you want them to drown?"

"Why, I'm glad that Hiram and Martha did not take that boat. I saw him in the water in a vision yesterday, and I tried to prevent him from going." If I had not been excited I doubt if I should have told this.

Frank looked at me bewildered as I tried to explain, "I just felt that something was going to happen to that boat to-day; I had a warning, and that is why I tried to keep them from going."

He sat down beside me and asked me to tell him about it. I don't remember what I

said, but when I was through he said to me: "Little girl, you are a fortune teller. Did you know it?"

Just then Martha came running in. She was crying in her excitement, and she came and put her arms around me and said, "Oh, how dreadful! You know the steamer! You know it's lost! I am so thankful, for it was you who saved us. We should have gone down to-day if it hadn't been for you, and all of our money would have gone to the bottom."

"Yes, Martha, I am thankful, that you and Hiram did not go, and are both safe."

"Yes," she continued, "Hiram just thanks God now. All the time before, he was fussing because he was set on going to-day, but he wanted to accommodate you. We are so glad the money was saved."

I laughed and said, "You would not have had much use for that money if you had gone to the bottom, would you?"

Just then Hiram came in, and hearing our last remark said, "Guess that's right; the money wouldn't have done us much good if we went under with it. And I'm obliged to you, Mrs. Leach, for putting me off."

Hiram was smoking, something he had never done before in the house, but he was excited and did not seem to think of it. He was a good Christian man, and getting down on his knees rendered a heart-felt thanksgiving.

I looked up at my husband, as Martha finished an "Amen," and saw that there were tears in his eyes. "Hard luck for the rest," he said. "They say the Captain was drunk, but God forgive him for he went down, too."

As Martha patted Prince on the head, she said, "I know that I have you to thank for saving our lives to-day."

All I said was "Yes, Martha, I am very glad you waited for me."

Some weeks after this last stirring event, Arthur came up one morning and asked, "Boss around?"

"No, Arthur, he has just gone to town; is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, but guess we will be leaving you soon. We don't want to stay in the Hollow another night."

I knew what he meant—it was the indefinable something that was driving him away.

I told him I was sorry to lose him and Clara.

"Does Clara want to go too?" I asked.

"Yes, she is all packed up. She won't stay there no more. We will go to New Bedford as soon as the new boat runs."

"Do you know of some man and wife to take your place? You have so many friends."

"I sure don't," he answered. "They're all afraid of this place. They don't come here nohow. No, they don't like ghosts."

"So that's the trouble! I guess you imagine that!" I said.

"No, I don't, Missus," replied Arthur. "You know you got ghosts in your house too. I seen the lights up in your window."

So they went away, and we tried to replace them, as we needed help around the house and in the stable; but everyone we asked to come and work for us would say they were engaged, or their folks were sick and needed them, or some other similar excuse. And all the time they really wanted work.

One evening, while sitting in the deepening twilight with some friends and talking about how hard it was to get help, we called Prince to do some of his wonderful tricks. I re-

marked that I was never afraid with Prince with me.

I arose to light the lamp, and as the match flared up, there was a minute of silence; then we heard a shriek and a most diabolical laugh followed by a hideous hiss and a repellent "Ha, Ha!" It was the same laugh we had heard months before.

Everyone seemed dumb. I began to tremble. My husband jumped up, grabbed Prince by the collar and said, "Find him, go for him!" But Prince did not move, and held his head down as though someone had struck him.

One of our friends exclaimed, "My God! What was that?" Another replied, "The Devil, I guess."

The women were ashen-white, and I myself was terror-stricken. Prince only crouched down lower—an unusual proceeding for him. We could not seem to place the direction from which the sound came, but everyone thought it was right in the midst of us.

Our guests were terribly afraid, and a quiet fell upon us all. Soon some of them remarked, "Guess we must be going home."

We urged them to stay, but all had some excuse to go, and I do not think anyone could have hired them to stay. They drove off very silently, and I felt that they would never come to visit us there again.

When we were alone that night, I said to my husband: "What can this mystery be? What does it mean? We must leave this place for I cannot stay here any longer. Don't you see something is wrong. Even our good dog would not hunt for anyone, so I know there was no one living to hunt for."

My husband admitted for the first time that it was a mystery to him. Neither of us slept much that night. The next morning I was sick and feverish. My husband also had a headache, but was up and around as usual.

I dressed and tried to do my daily tasks, but I felt very weak. Frank told me I had better have his father come and tone me up; so when he came, we told him about the affair of the previous night.

He only said, "It *is* a little strange. Don't suppose someone was playing a joke on you, do you?"

"No," I quickly replied, "I have heard it

before, some time ago, only it was more gruesome than this. Oh! I do not want to stay here any longer! How can I be happy with that shadow around me all the time? I can feel it. I know it is here, but I cannot explain it. Please tell your son to live somewhere else. I cannot be left alone here again."

"But," he said, "you have the dog."

"Yes, but he did not move! he was afraid too."

There was a little silence then. After a while Father said, "It is too bad to leave a nice home like this. You are pretty well off here, and this house is yours; why, there isn't a better place in town."

"I know it, Father, but don't you see how it is? Our friends will not come here again; and I can imagine the talk about town that will follow what has happened here. Arthur and Clara have gone, and no one will come to work for us. I will not stay here alone one hour after this."

My temperature was rising and I was almost ill. Frank and his father passed out of the room and I could hear them talking.—"Yes, there was some talk about this place,

but I never took any notice of it," said his father. "No, they did not stay here long after they rented the place. You have been here three years and have not solved the mystery."

Then I heard my husband say, "My wife says there is no one living to find. She has some queer ideas sometimes."

"Well," the doctor said, "you had better stay around until your wife gets better, for she is really sick, but as soon as her nerves get straightened out, she will be all right. I have always considered her quite level-headed. She will be all right in a few days."

My fever ran intermittently for several days, sometimes reaching 102 and then going back to 100, then down to normal. In the mornings I would feel that I could get up, at noontime I would not feel so well, and at sundown my temperature would go up again. This continued for some time, but gradually I began to eat and get stronger.

An old lady who had been one of the doctor's nurses for years stayed with me. Good old Angeline was one of the old settlers and only worked now in her old age to accommodate her friends. With her loving service,

she was like an old-time mammy—only a white one.

After a while I was up and was able to attend to nearly all the work myself. Generally the household duties were nothing to me, as I was young and strong and could do quite a little hustling about in the early morning hours.

We never mentioned the past occurrence, although I was thinking all the time, "I cannot stay here; this is not home to me any longer." I had the feeling that I must close up the house and make another home.

One day I saw my husband and his father looking up at the house. There was a carpenter with them and I knew that they were talking of other improvements that we had planned in the past.

A feeling like a cool breath passed around me, and then all at once everything became void—just space and darkness, then hot flashes came and went all over me. I seemed to be near a furnace, for I felt so hot; then, after a pause, things were natural again.

I stepped to the door and asked, "What are you planning now?"

"We are thinking of putting an outer en-

try at the side door, a sort of little sun parlor. It will be pleasant for warm days, for it gets the south sun here."

I felt that all the repairs that could be made on the house would be useless; that the time would be ill spent, energy wasted, and the money thrown away.

I repeated to myself, "We must get away from here. I don't want any repairs."

But I did not want to appear unreasonable. My father-in-law was a man of good judgment, and I could not very well dispute him, but I reminded him, "You know we are going to Maine for a little change; why not wait until we come back before you do any more to the house?"

I can remember clearly how the doctor said, "Work before play," and my husband agreed, "Guess we will get at it while the weather is good."

How could I make them understand what I felt? I suppose if I had lived in the time of witches, I would have been called one had I expressed my feelings.

I felt that I could *not* stay at our house another winter. That evening when my husband was having a good smoke, I said to him,

"I cannot be happy here and I shall never be well as long as I stay in this house. I do not feel like my old self; my nerves are all on edge. Why can't we make a change? We aren't too poor to live in town. We surely don't have to consider every cent."

But my husband thought the property was too good to leave, the house too good to close up and let go to ruin. After some hesitation he said, "No, I don't feel that we can afford it."

I was disappointed and my heart was heavy. My depression was greater than I could tell. For a moment I seemed to dream that everything was dark and void, that the atmosphere was filled with dust and smoke; then all was darkness.

When I came to myself again, I heard my husband saying: "Yes, I think some shade of light green, or some soft color, would be better. Red is not so good for the nerves. Yellow or blue is more comforting. You do not want red again."

I said, "I wish you would wait a while before you do any papering. You know it stirs the house up so."

Whereupon my husband replied, "Women

are beyond me. I thought you wanted that papering done some time ago."

I tried to pass it off by saying, "Well, you never know when a woman is going to change her mind."

And Frank said, "I find that is true,"—a sharp remark for one usually so courteous.

The outside repairs were started next day. It was a beautiful golden and brown autumn, and for more than six weeks we had dry harvest weather. Nature seemed to smile, and although a poet says, "Oh, autumn, why so soon?" an autumn like this could not come too soon. The air was sweet with clear northwest winds, and the ground was very dry, as rain had not fallen for many weeks. The repairs, more numerous than we first had planned, were finished at last. And now those on the inside were commenced. My head had been aching for several days past, and my mind would not be at rest. Yet things seemed to be getting back to normal, and we never referred to the past mysterious events.

One night I was nervous and felt mentally distressed so I thought I would go to

bed early and see what a good long sleep would do to restore my good spirits.

I left Angeline with my little girl, and, going to my room, drew the shades, undressed and went to bed. While I lay there, a strange, sweet peace came over me and I rested comfortably. As the shadows began to come with night fall, I thought of the sewing I was doing, of the little red coat I had nearly completed for my little Josie, and I thought how well she would look with her soft brown eyes and fair silky hair.

Then my mind wandered on till I went to sleep. Some time later I woke with a start. My husband was still in the living room smoking. I remember just how his cigar smelled, for he always smoked the same fragrant brand. I heard old Angeline singing as she was getting Josie to sleep.

I thought I would call to my husband to bring in the lamp, when suddenly it seemed light. I glanced toward the door leading into the hall. It opened and a shadow came toward me. I did not feel afraid; and just waited. I saw a woman, but could not hear her, for she just glided up to my bedside.

I was not alarmed; in fact, I was pleased,

and reached out my hand toward her. She took it in both of hers. I could not feel her —just sensed her. With a little caress, she leaned down and kissed my forehead. There was no sound, but I felt the kiss. It was like a soft breeze. I was aware of her voice saying, "One of my good children." I felt drawn to her and raised myself up a little higher. Then I noticed she was tall, dark and slender and that her eyes were very black.

She wore an old fashioned bonnet tied with a ribbon under her chin, a red and black cassimere shawl folded so that a point came in the front and in the back. The shawl was of good quality and had evidently once been very stylish. It was fastened with two gold-headed pins connected by a small chain.

She smiled very kindly at me. I leaned nearer, but she kept a little distance between us all the time. She went toward the hall door that led to the big front door, and she seemed to beckon me to follow her. I did so, but there was still that little distance between us.

As we neared the front door, I did not see her. I looked out of the window in the big door, and saw her outside, although the door

had not been opened. She pointed to the forest on the other side of the road; and all the time the distance between us seemed to be growing greater.

I called to her to come back, but as I looked at her in the distance again, I saw fire all about her; she was still beckoning for me to come. I opened the door and started to follow, but the fire dazzled me so I could not see very well. I rubbed my eyes with my handkerchief, and when I looked again she was all fire. All I could see of her was her face, and one arm and hand which beckoned to me and then pointed a way off in the distance.

That was all. I saw no more, for I came back to myself—to the worldly sphere—and found myself on the piazza in my night dress. I was afraid and gave a shriek. My husband was instantly at my side asking, "What was it? What is the matter? Why are you out here? You have no clothes on! Why aren't you in bed? Has anyone harmed you? For God's sake, what is the matter?"

He put his arm around me and carried me into the house and put me in bed again. Angeline appeared on the scene with a light.

I said to my husband frantically, "Oh, we must get away from here right away. You must listen to me this time. We are in great danger. Something will ruin us if we stay here any longer."

My husband thought I had been walking in my sleep and told me to try to be quiet and go to sleep again. He said I must have had a bad dream.

"No," I said, "It was not a dream." And I told Angeline to come too, and listen to me. "A woman has been here. She came to my bedside right here. She was tall and slim and had a sweet face. I felt that she loved me and I loved her too. She had on a long red and black cassimere shawl folded in points about her shoulders. It came to the bottom of her dress and was pinned together with gold-headed pins. She had on a little bonnet tied under her chin, and her eyes were very black. Oh, I shall always remember just how she looked."

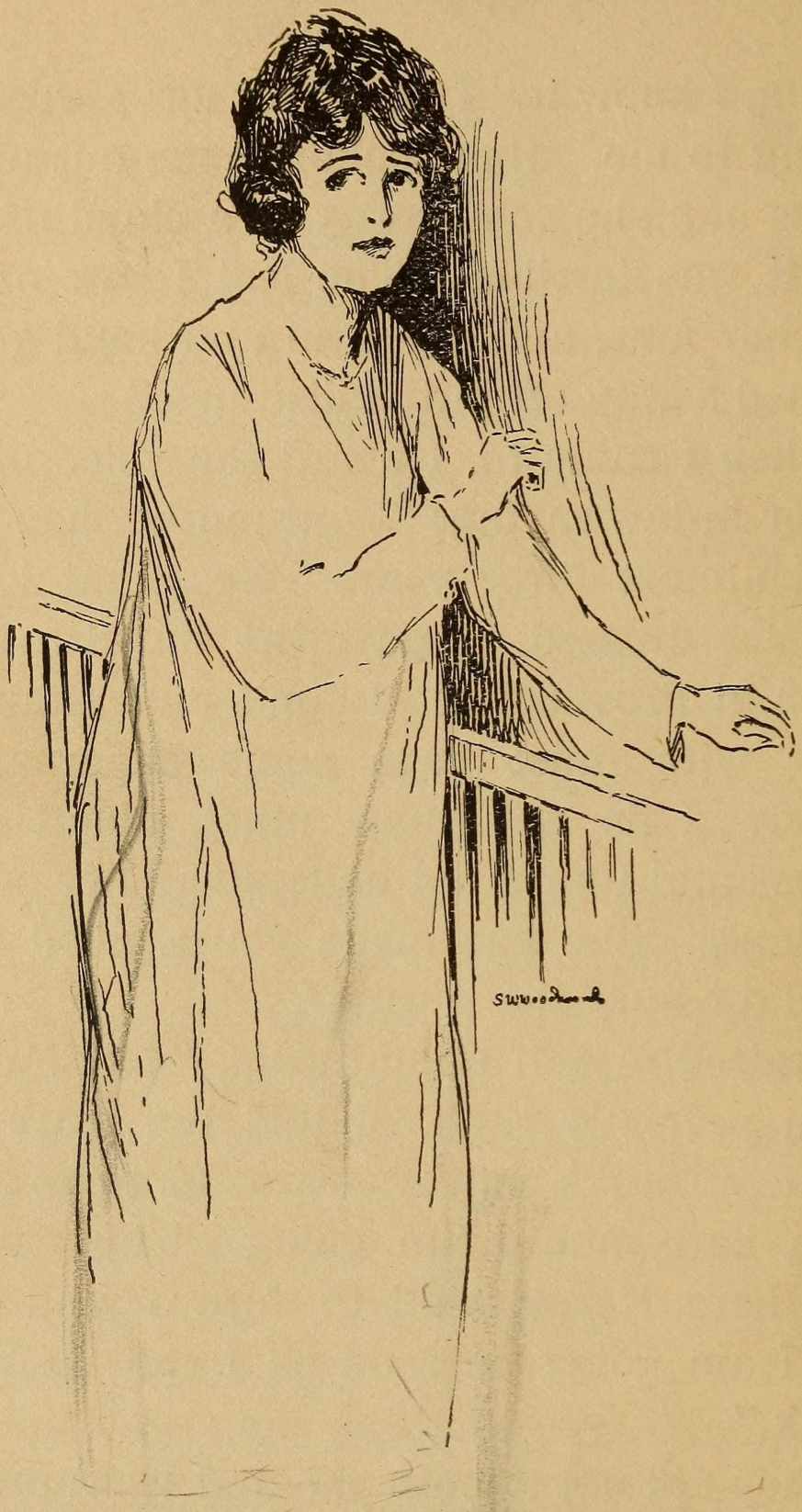
"Why," Angeline broke in, "that was your husband's mother. I nursed her in her last sickness. That was when your husband was just a little fellow. You have described just the way she used to dress."

"Oh, I knew it," I said, "for she seemed to belong to me. She beckoned me out of the house and she went away in a cloud of fire. Oh, it was terrible! The last I saw of her was her face, and one arm and hand which pointed a way off in the distance."

When I came to, I heard the voice of my father-in-law saying: "Your mother has been dead almost forty years. Yes, that is the way she dressed. I gave the shawl to your sister in Providence. I don't understand it. Your wife must have some supernatural power. I do not know much about such things, and I have not understood her moods at times. She has made you a good wife, and I am sure she is sane."

I raised myself up and said, "Yes, Father, I am perfectly sane. I told the truth last night. Frank's mother warns us to go away from here, and I am going. You can all stay here, if you want to, forever and ever, but I am going as soon as I can pack my trunk."

They did not answer me and went out. I dressed, feeling weak and faint. Then I went into the living room and said, "I mean what I say. I will not live here any longer." They



"I FOUND MYSELF ON THE PIAZZA IN MY NIGHT-DRESS."

knew that I meant what I said, for I never had taken so firm a stand before.

My husband did not reply, but the doctor said, "Well, where will you live?" And I answered I would live anywhere but in that house.

"We might go to Portland for a couple of weeks for a little change," said my husband. "Perhaps a visit to her old home would do her good." He was addressing his father, but I interrupted and said, "Yes, I want to go to-morrow."

"Why, it will take a few days to get things in readiness to leave."

"No," I replied, "I shall leave here tomorrow. Please, please don't argue with me. My head is beginning to ache, and I shall grow worse every hour I remain."

"All right," he agreed. "Pick up a few things that you will need, and I will try and get someone to close up the house."

I did not care to give the house a thought. My only desire was to get away from it just as quickly as possible. One more night there seemed an eternity, and if there had been a boat running that day, I should have made a

scene if they had not allowed me to go that afternoon.

Ordinarily I was very particular about the clothing I took when going away, especially if I were going to my home town, as I liked to have my old friends see me well-dressed; but now I gathered up any thing that came to hand.

My husband began to pick out things to pack, but I said, "Don't bother; I only want something for Josie."

"Well, I want a few things myself, for we shall be gone for a couple of weeks," he replied.

"We shall be gone from here forever," I said. I guess he thought I was getting hysterical, and he laughed and asked: "You will let me take an extra necktie, won't you?"

In my thought was the vision of the woman that had come to me, how she had beckoned and then pointed away off in the distance. And so a restless night passed. Not until we were on board the boat did I breathe freely. All at once the high tension left me, and I felt relieved. A thrill of happiness came over me and I commenced to sing.

Frank noticed the change and remarked, "You are feeling better already."

"Yes, I am feeling fine."

"Well, that is the best news yet, for I was getting worried about your health. You know you and the little girl mean all the world to me."

While we were at dinner in the salon, my husband got up from the table and shook hands with an old weather beaten man. They talked a few minutes, and then they came up to me, and Frank said, "I want you to meet my wife, Captain Harding." We shook hands, and not very lightly either, as he had a strong grip, and I don't think he was much used to a lady's society.

Captain Harding was an old sea captain, and my husband had known him when he was a boy. In fact, he was quite a friend of my husband's family, for my husband's brother had, when a boy, made a cruise on one of the old Captain's whaling vessels from New Bedford. My husband called up memories of boyhood days, and we spent a pleasant hour talking with him.

As we were about to go up on deck, the old man said, "Hold on, Frank, I wanted to

ask you if you knew whether those two devils I put in your father's hospital died or not. 'Twas some years ago, and I said, 'The Lord be thanked,' when I landed them there. They had shipped from some foreign port where we put in. We were short handed, and had to take what we could find for help. They were about the worst specimens I ever had for a crew. They hated each other and the only way I could prevent them from killing each other, was to keep them in irons. Even when they got quite sick, so sick that they could not eat their salt chunk, they would swear at each other.

"One had the most horrible laugh I ever heard. He would give a roar and a 'Ha,ha,' and then say to the other one, 'I will walk every night from my grave; I will never leave you; I will always be behind you; I am the Devil; only my tail is hidden.' This fellow was some sort of a Hindoo or Indian. He did some things I could never see through nor understand. He would light a match and I would see it burning, and then no matter how closely I looked, the burnt match would disappear. Sometimes, I thought he swallowed them. If he did, his stomach must

have been full of wood. The other sailors were all afraid of him."

The old Captain seemed to like to tell the story of these two men, and he continued, "Both swore to haunt the other, I hope they were sick enough to die, for they were a drag on humanity."

I looked at my husband, and he looked at me, but neither of us spoke. We were both thinking of the terrible laugh we had heard and of the match that flared up and went out so quickly.

The Captain apparently had forgotten to wait for a reply and commenced to spin some other yarn.

The next morning, we landed in Portland, Maine. The newsboy came on board with the morning papers. I bought one and carelessly opened it.

On the front page I saw in big head lines, "Forest Fire Sweeps Town of Milton. Valuable Property Destroyed—Three Hotels and Ten Dwelling Houses Burned to Ground." Then the account continued: "The fire ran so swiftly and silently in the dry underbrush, owing to the continued spell of dry weather, that it is feared some lives may be lost. At

the last account this morning, the old Marine Hospital, owned by Doctor Leach, also the cottage in the hollow, have been swept away. These went during the night. It is reported that the doctor's son and his family were away. We hope that this is true, as they probably would not have escaped with their lives. The place was called the Happy Hill, and was a landmark."

I felt faint, and the paper dropped at my side. I cannot explain what my feelings were, but they were of thanksgiving and joy—my little Josie and my husband might have been burned to death. Then it flashed through my brain—the warning! Thank God for that warning!

My husband came to my side and picked up the paper. He had read about it too. I looked up at him and said, "Your mother saved us."

Frank took off his hat and stood bare headed with bowed head as if in prayer. "Yes," he said, "God bless her." And I saw the tears running down his face.

Oh, you, who have a presentiment or warning, take heed! Do not pass it lightly

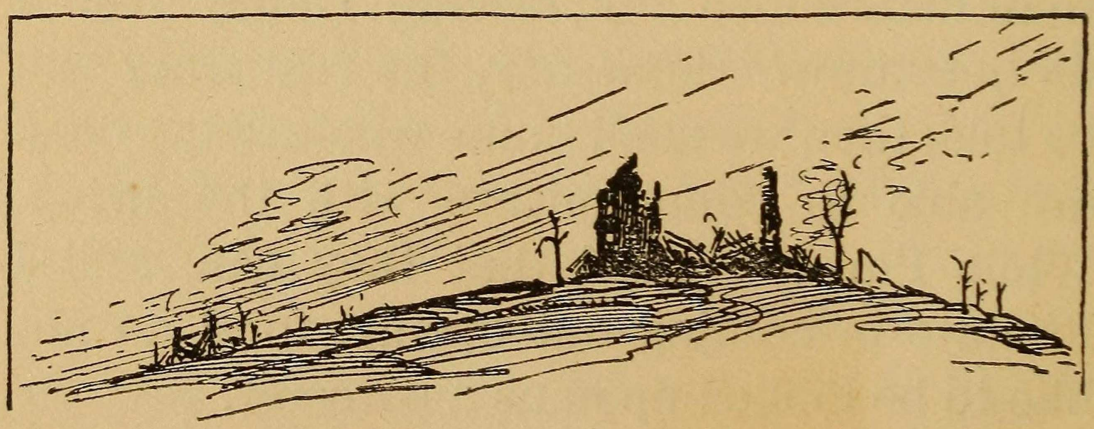
by. Many years have passed since then, and these thoughts come to me at night. Now I am old, but I can say truthfully, that what I have told you is no fiction, but the sober truth. Some of the old settlers of Milton would remember the incidents I have told.

My husband has passed away, and I am calm and peaceful. Now, when passions are no more, and it will soon be time to go to my other home, I feel sure that he will explain to me that the Hindoo was responsible for the sinking of the boat, and setting fire to the forest. For I'm positive that he was never buried in that little grave-yard just beyond the house.

There is one thing that I do know, and that is, Frank's mother always had the premonition that the place would be burned down some day by a forest fire.

Whether it was her spirit, or my intuition that determined my leaving Happy Hill, I do not know. Some day, the real story will be told, then we shall know whether the dead are able to communicate with the living. While I'm convinced that they can, still I hesitate in coming out openly, for I do not like to be looked upon as a sorcerer.

I'm sure you'll not condemn me for the attitude I have taken in this matter. It is best for others to reveal what is beyond the grave.



H 113 82

Images Processed by Gary Brin
Copyright © Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library

NANCY HANKS LINCOLN PUBLIC LIBRARY
Historical Book Collection

Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library

NANCY HANKS LINCOLN PUBLIC LIBRARY
Historical Book Collection